

EMTLE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
EEFORMEB 257

narrative. Further, though Yizetelly had very good grounds for asserting that he reckoned it a bad week when the sale of the Zola translations fell below a thousand volumes, this statement, which seemed at first sight to indicate a very large circulation,¹ was again indiscreet, and was eagerly seized hold of and magnified by those who were already lying in wait to destroy him.

Of the inner workings of that conspiracy the writer might perhaps say a good deal; but for the purposes of this narrative, the facts which appeared on the surface are sufficient. A campaign was started, chiefly against Vizetelly & Co., and ostensibly for the purpose of protecting boys and girls, against what was called "pernicious literature." A society styling itself the "National Vigilance Association" eventually took the matter in hand. Its secretary, the person usually representing it in public, was a man named Coote; the agent for its publications was a Protestant fanatic named Kensit;² among those who gave it their countenance was W. T. Stead, then, as already mentioned, editor of "The Pall Mall Gazette." The publications of Kensit on "The High Church Confessional," and those of Stead on "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," would have seemed to indicate that both Kensit and Stead

favoured the doctrine of outspokenness or publicity to which Zola gave effect in his novels, the doctrine which he summed up in the

¹ About this time Vizetelly & Co. were selling no fewer than eighteen of Zola's books. And a sale of one thousand copies a week, representing one of fifty-two thousand a year, would not really be large had a publisher's estimation. It would represent an average of less than three thousand copies a year for each work, but of course the newer volumes sold more largely than the older ones.

^a "Truth," September 22, 1898.